



WATERTOWN POLICE DEPARTMENT

David Brower, Chief of Police

Date: 11/19/25

To: Finance Committee

From: Chief Dave Brower

RE: Side Letter on 11/24/25 agenda – Leave Time Extension

Finance Committee Members,

Because of low staffing over the 2025 year, we have not had time available on the calendar for officers and sergeants to completely use their Vacation and Holiday time. As of October 14, ~ 3325 hours remained in officer's banks. There are ~380 hours scheduled on the calendar for November through December, leaving ~2945 hours unspent at the end of the year. I would like to find a solution to this that is both fair to the City's interests and does not create a burden on our officers. Not having had the opportunity to spend off time, as well as working many more hours than usual, is a reality they faithfully shouldered like champs last year, and it would be best for us to not exacerbate that harm by letting them lose their time. I have asked other Police Department leadership for solutions they have used in the past, and found that another method is to pay out the time so it is not lost, as a much quicker solution. I have been open to that method as well. Because of the salary savings that naturally comes with multiple vacancies, when this problem arises, there is usually money available in the budget for a payout.

This problem was created because we were understaffed by up to 8 officers at various times in 2025, due to lengthy Family-Medical Leave, military deployments, and vacancies. Taking a look back at the year, the officers did a reasonable job of burning time off when it was available on the calendar, even though much of that would not have been convenient to their family's lives.

I had asked the Union for suggestions to solve this problem and to understand what they would prefer. I suggested we consider a payout, an increase of carryover and extension of time off into 2026, or a combination of those. They did not request a payout. I am confident there will be room for them to fit these extra hours into the remainder of the 2025 calendar and the entire 2026 calendar.

I have attached a Side Letter of Agreement that the Union has agreed to, please see it for the particulars. To summarize, we would like a carryover of their time (up to 45 Holiday hours and 90 Vacation hours) that they were unable to use this year. The use of this carryover time would extend until Dec 31 of 2026 rather than the usual Mar 31 of 2026. They would be asked to prioritize using that carryover time as soon as practical, to prevent again having much time in the banks at the end of 2026.

Dave Brower
Police Chief